

WYCOMBE Wanderers' hopes of disposing of Minehead in the F.A. Cup first round tomorrow (Saturday) suffered a jolt when it was announced that striker Mick Holifield is extremely doubtful to play at Irnham Road.

Holifield suffered an ankle injury last Tuesday against Milton Keynes but was expected to recover in time for the cup tie tomorrow. However, when the swelling on the ankle refused to go down Holifield went for an X-ray on Wednesday which revealed damage to the ligaments. Mick will have treatment every night before the game in a bid to get him fit.

Blues manager John Reardon told me this week: "Mick has only a 40-60 chance of playing. He is almost certain to be out unless he makes a remarkable recovery over the next three days."

The shock news of Holifield means the manager will have to change his original plans on

Route by car

WYCOMBE supporters travelling by car can take the following route to Minehead tomorrow. Join M4 to Bristol. Take M5 at Almondsbury inter-change, signposted Exeter and South West. Leave motorway at Bridgwater turning.

Take A39 signposted to Minehead. When approaching Minehead ignore the 'Sea Front' sign and follow road into main town. Look out for 'Coach Park/Car Park' signs pointing to the right. This will lead to car park at the entrance of Minehead's ground in Irnham Road.

NEW COACH

BRIAN Hall, a 37 year old instructor at Hendon Police College, has been appointed as Wycombe Wanderers' coach.

Hall takes over from Laurie Churchill, who joined Fred Callaghan at Woking two weeks ago as coach. Churchill had been with Wycombe for most of the season.

His replacement, Brian Hall, had several successful years with Allen Batsford, first at Walton and Hersham and then at Wimbledon. While coach with Wimbledon for two years, the club won the Southern League Premier Division title twice.

Hall's last club was local rivals Slough Town where he spent 18 months before deciding to move on to Loakes Park. He started his duties this week.



F.A. Cup First Round Preview by Stuart Earp

team selection. John is giving no secrets away but says he may well play four men in midfield with possibly Howard Kennedy pushing forward.

Whatever the selection, the likely omission of Holifield comes as a major blow for Wanderers. Since moving into the front three, Mick has brought more thrust to attack with his speed while his powerful shooting is always an asset.

If Holifield doesn't play I think the manager will field the side that won at Maidenhead on Saturday with either Steve Vass or John Priestley as substitute. The inclusion of veteran campaigner Roger Day could prove useful for what is likely to prove a difficult game.

IMPRESSIVE

Minehead's success over the last five years makes impressive reading. In 1973-74 they were fourth in the Southern League Div. One South and third the following year. In 75-76 they won the Division with only three defeats in 38 games and in their first season in the Premier Division they were runners up to Wimbledon.

Their record for the season read: P 42, W 23, D 12, L 7, F 73, A 39, Pts 58. Only Wimbledon put the double over them.

This season they have yet to match the sort of form that made them runners up. But don't be deceived by their league position. The Premier Division is extremely close with only eight points separating the leaders with Minehead in 18th place.

Minehead's strength is difficult to evaluate. Last season they had an excellent run in the F.A. Cup, winning 1-0 at Swansea City and going out at Portsmouth 2-1 in the second round. This season though, they took two games to beat Salisbury in the fourth qualifying round.

Salisbury are only moderately placed in Division One South and they held Minehead 1-1 at home. In the replay Minehead were taken to extra time before winning 2-1. That performance, coupled with indifferent league form which saw them take only three points from six league games in October, suggests they are not the side of last year.

A better guide perhaps comes from Brian Lee, Wycombe's vice-chairman, who saw Minehead beat Dartford 3-1 recently. Brian was impressed by Minehead's forward line and also said they had one player to watch in midfield. The defence is useful with a possible weakness at full back.

The goalkeeper John Macey has come across Wanderers before. John was in the Newport County side that came to Loakes Park in the first round of the Cup in 1973 when the Blues won 3-1 with goals from Steve Perrin (2) and Dylan Evans.

But the key men in the Minehead side are the forwards who have built themselves quite a reputation. Andy Leitch, Jim Jenkins and Derek Bryant bagged no fewer than 96 goals last season and Leitch has a personal record he will be hoping to continue against Wanderers.

The tall centre forward has scored in his last five consecutive F.A. Cup games against Falmouth, Swansea, Portsmouth and Salisbury (twice). He is also the club's top marksman this season.

The duel between Minehead's striking trio and Wycombe's back four will be the decisive factor but the form of Alan Phillips, Paul Birdseye and Co must give them confidence. Added to that Derek Harris and Dylan Evans have developed a useful understanding while there is currently plenty of invention in midfield.

When all's said and done, it comes down to the side who finds its best form on the day and if Wycombe, even without Holifield, play to their potential there is no reason why they should not be going into the 'hat' for the second round draw on Monday.



MICK HOLIFIELD
... injury blow

SPONSOR FOR LEAGUE CUP

THE Isthmian League has announced yet another sponsorship deal — this time for their League Cup competition involving all three divisions. The package with Japanese company Hitachi Ltd is worth £6,000.

The Hitachi Cup will have two qualifying rounds for clubs in Division 1 and 2 from which 10 clubs will join the 22 Premier Division teams. The

first qualifying round starts on December 5.

Cash awards will be distributed as follows: £40 per club to the 16 winners in the first round proper; £70 to the eight winning clubs in the 2nd round; £150 to the four winning clubs in the 3rd round; £300 to the two semi-finalists and £600 to the winners. As usual there is a disciplinary scheme and prize money will reduce by £10 a penalty point in the 1st and 2nd rounds, £20 in the 3rd round, £30 in the semis and £40 in the final.

Hitachi colour television sets or music centres will be awarded to the Division 2 and Division 1 clubs going furthest in the cup. The club with the best aggregate score from any four league or Hitachi Cup matches during the first three rounds of the competition will receive the same prize. Each of the 10 winning clubs from Division 1 and 2 will receive a Hitachi product worth £70 while players in the semis and final will receive radios.